



IN MEMORIAM

Hans Rogger
Professor of History, Emeritus
UC Los Angeles
1923 – 2002

Born September 9, 1923 in Germany, in Herford, Westphalia, Hans attended local schools until they were closed to Jews. He was then sent to boarding school for several months in Switzerland, and returned to Herford once Jews were prohibited from sending money out of Germany. In anticipation of emigration, his father insisted that he learn English and gain experience in a practical trade. For both reasons, Hans was sent to Berlin to stay with family friends. There in November 1938, he witnessed the horrors of Kristallnacht. In 1939, after several delays, he, his younger brother, Eric, and his parents left Germany via Holland and England, and arrived in New York, where they settled in the Washington Heights neighborhood. In 1941, Hans graduated from George Washington High School.

After serving in the U.S. Navy, he attended City College of New York and in 1948 completed his B.A. degree at Sarah Lawrence. At Harvard (1948-50), he took his M.A. in Soviet Area Studies and, in 1956, he completed his Ph.D. in Russian history, under the supervision of Michael Karpovich. His revised dissertation was published in 1960 as *National Consciousness in Eighteenth-Century Russia*. He taught at Sarah Lawrence from 1953 to 1961 and married Claire Ryan in 1955. Their son Alex was born in 1958.

In 1961, Hans joined the UCLA Department of History and co-edited with his colleague, Eugen Weber, *The European Right: A Historical Profile* (1965). Numerous journal articles published over the years were collected in *Jewish Policies and Right-Wing Politics in Imperial Russia* (1986). One of his most acclaimed works, *Russia in the Age of Modernisation and Revolution, 1881-1917*, appeared in 1983. Throughout the 1980s and 90s, he continued to publish articles, essays and reviews in scholarly and popular publications. From 1962 to 1966, he served as Director of UCLA's Center for Russian and East European Studies, and from 1978 to 1983 he was chair of the UCLA History Department. Other UCLA posts included chairing the Academic Senate's Council on Academic Personnel, and he served as co-director of the Rand/UCLA Center for Soviet Studies. He served on the editorial boards of the *Slavic Review* and the *American Historical Review*. He held numerous grants and fellowships, including the Guggenheim and NEH fellowships.

Beginning with his research on 18th century Russian national consciousness, Rogger's work was characterized by close, exacting readings of text — governmental, literary, and otherwise — and an insistence on understanding even the shrillest of voices with empathy, and in historical context. Rogger's temperament was a liberal one, and he spent much of his academic career explicating illiberality, explaining its preoccupations, its biases, and its hatreds but in ways that lent them an internal coherence often lost on other, less meticulous, less cautious, less dispassionate scholars. His work on the chasm, misconstrued in late imperial Russia and blurred later in the wake of the Russian revolution, separating Russian conservatism and right-wing thought and politics remains definitive, and he shaped indelibly contemporary historical understanding of both. Still more influential was Rogger's research, over the course of many years, into Russian governmental policy toward Jews. Here he undermined widely, often fiercely held beliefs in the culpability of the Tsarist regime for the pogroms of 1881-82, and the assumption that it held, and also consistently promoted a coherent policy vis-à-vis its Jews. Instead Rogger found that its stance was

characterized by uncertainty, not clarity, by distrust for Jews, but no clearly wrought policy of persecution, and, above all, by fear of change that rendered all radical solutions, including reactionary ones, inconceivable.

Rogger's scholarship tended to suggest, never hector, to nuance; his work was characterized by its unusual subtlety, and by a not inconsiderable conceptual daring that ran deep, that was implicit in his deeply documented prose, and nearly always beneath the surface. He was self-effacing and principled, perhaps, at times, to a fault. Rogger destroyed a full-length monograph he had quite nearly completed on the Beilis Affair, reducing its essential findings to a first rate article on the subject (reprinted in his *Jewish Policies and Right-Wing Policies in Imperial Russia*) after the publication in 1966 of Maurice Samuel's popular book *The Blood Accusation*.

He understood with rare clarity that the excavation of historical truth was excruciatingly difficult, that its discovery demanded more than mere erudition and exacting labor, but also considerable, sustained historical imagination. He was a deeply cultivated person, greatly moved by music and the arts, widely read in European literature, in political theory, in many different areas of history, sophisticated and worldly. A close, meticulous, original reader of the Russian classics — he built deft, suggestive analyses into his monographs of Russian writers ranging from D.I. Fonvizin to Dostoevsky — the writer closest to his editor Suvorin, Chekhov states, much as Rogger might have, "We shall not play the charlatan, and we will declare frankly that nothing is clear in this world. Only fools and charlatans know and understand everything." Clearly, Hans Rogger knew and understood much — which he conveyed throughout his life with clarity, brilliance, and wit to his readers, colleagues, students, and friends.

Thomas S. Hines
Stephen Zipperstein